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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EUR/ACE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR GERARD AND FREITAS

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: USDA ENGLISH PROGRAM OPENS DOORS AT
AGRICULTURE UNIVERSITY

REF: ASHGABAT 787

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Rector of Turkmenistan's Agriculture University and the head of International Relations at the Ministry of Agriculture said they welcome additional USDA support for English classes and that they are willing to consider U.S.-supported economics courses. They look forward to the visit of a U.S. professor in late January or early February as part of USDA's Faculty Exchange Program. The Turkmen officials listed a variety of issues about which they would welcome information and assistance from the United States, especially additional English courses. The hiring of 73 new, young instructors across all disciplines indicates a push to inject new energy and fresh expertise into the University's program. This is a good relationship with potential to grow, but will probably progress through a process of negotiation. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) After post submitted a request for a meeting on November 17, on December 19 Agriculture University Rector, Gurbandurdy Mammetgulev, and Ministry of Agriculture International Relations head, Shammy Annamyradov, met with econoff to discuss the development of the English Language Teaching program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). (NOTE: Post and USDA came up with the idea of an English program to help prepare candidates for the Faculty Exchange Program in Agricultural Economics, after observing that Turkmenistan did not have any eligible candidates due to the lack of English language skills as well as an understanding of Western economics principles (reftel). END NOTE.) Mammetgulev could not predict if some instructors were becoming adequately prepared to participate in the Faculty Exchange Program, saying that "time will tell."

FEEDBACK ON CONCEPT OF AN ECONOMICS COURSE

¶4. (SBU) Following up on the possibility of offering an economics course that would work towards bridging the knowledge gap in that field (reftel), Mammetgulev and

Annamyradov agreed in principle to a U.S.-sponsored economics courses at the university. Post is acquainted with a U.S. citizen based in Turkmenistan who would be qualified to teach such a course. Mammetgulev and Annamyradov requested a meeting with this person before making any decisions about whether or not they would agree to offer such a course. They understood that post has not identified funding for such a program yet.

FEEDBACK ON OFFERED VISIT OF UN-R PROFESSOR

15. (SBU) Mammetgulev and Annamyradov welcomed a visit by Stan Johnson of the University of Nevada-Reno as part of the USDA Faculty Exchange Program (reftel). They made two suggestions regarding timing: (1) If Johnson would like to meet with students, they recommend that he come sometime after February 2, and (2) The date of the students' return from winter break. (NOTE: They also requested that his visit not start on February 2 because that is the students' first day back. They prefer to let the students settle in before Johnson's visit. END NOTE.) If Johnson's visit would be geared towards instructors, they recommended that the visit take place during the previous two weeks, January 19-30. Mammetgulev and Annamyradov requested a list of Johnson's areas of specialization.

WHAT THE TURKMEN ARE INTERESTED IN

16. (SBU) Mammetgulev and Annamyradov then named various issues that they are interested in, including new growing methods, amelioration of soil and, without going into

ASHGABAT 00001648 002 OF 002

specifics, hygiene. They also mentioned that they would like to come to a greater understanding of the question "How does four percent of the U.S. population feed the entire country?"

They noted that they are ready at any time to provide classroom space and students for additional English classes. Annamyradov reiterated a previous issue that they had raised about the Faculty Exchange Program -- that their faculty would not leave their families to study abroad for longer than three months at the very most. In addition, Mammetgulev and Annamyradov mentioned that the university hired 73 new, young instructors across all specialties at the beginning of the school year. (COMMENT: Mammetgulev and Annamyradov said at the meeting in June that they feared that they didn't have any qualified economists to take part in the Faculty Exchange Program and emphasized their desire to send young instructors on the program. END COMMENT.)

17. (SBU) COMMENT: This relationship shows very positive signs because of the warmth as well as the give and take in evidence at this meeting. It will take some negotiation to find a solution acceptable to both sides regarding the issue of the length of the Faculty Exchange Program. Post awaits USDA's feedback on timing for Johnson's visit and a list of topics and interlocutors. END COMMENT.
MILES